Winter themes for preschool: snow, bears, gingerbread

Peabody blog · Teaching · updated 2026-10-30

Six winter themes for preschool, each a full week: snow, bears and hibernation, gingerbread, shadows and light, night and day, and trains, with books, songs and snacks.

Peabody has six winter themes for preschool, each a full week: winter and snow, bears and hibernation, gingerbread, shadows and light, night and day, and trains. Each one comes with circle time, books, a craft, a public-domain song with its words, a Kitchen snack, a letter pack and an outside game, and none of them leans on a holiday or a character. Pick one in the theme planner and the week is filled in. Peabody is free through the end of 2026.

Winter is a good stretch for themes, because the children can see it out of the window. Below are the six, then the any-time themes that rooms often run in January and February.

Winter and snow (December to February)

The winter and snow week is snow and ice, mittens and coats, and what happens when ice melts.

- Circle time question: "What happens to snow when it gets warm?"
- Letter: W is for winter.
- Craft: a cotton-ball snowman on blue card: cotton balls in three circles, a paper hat and scarf, a drawn face.
- Song: "Mary Had a Little Lamb," whose fleece was white as snow.
- Snack: Frozen Yogurt Bark.
- Outside: a melt race. Put one ice cube in the sun and one in the shade, and check after snack.
- Books: three read-alouds, Lou and the Snow Dad, Pim and the Mitten and Where Is Ned's Hat?, plus Dad Naps (level 0) for a cozy day inside with the twos.

This is the most read-aloud-heavy week of the winter, so it suits rooms with older fours.

Bears and hibernation (December, January)

The bears week is where bears sleep, why they sleep all winter, and a cozy cave day.

- Question: "Where does a bear sleep in the winter?"
- Letter: B is for bear.
- Craft: a paper-bag cave, laid on its side, with cotton-ball snow on top and a bear inside.
- Song: "Wee Willie Winkie."
- Snack: Teddy Bear Toast.

• Outside: a bear hunt walk: over the log, through the grass, into the cave under the slide.
• Books: Not Yet, Ted (level 3), Dad Naps (level 0), The Black Cat (level 2), and The Bear Who Could Not Sleep, a read-aloud.

Gingerbread (December)

The gingerbread week is the old tale of the running cookie, smelling spices and a pretend bakery.

• Question: "Why did the gingerbread man run away?"
• Letter: G is for gingerbread.
• Craft: a gingerbread person. A grown-up cuts the brown card; the children add a face, buttons or stickers, and a name.
• Song: "Pat-a-Cake," the baker's rhyme.
• Snack: Banana Oat Cookies.
• Outside: "Run, run, as fast as you can." The runners run to the fence; the fox, a grown-up, walks slowly after them.
• Books: The Gingerbread Man, a read-aloud with the line children shout along, Fox and the Hen (level 1) for a kinder fox to compare, and A Bun for Fran (level 2) for the bakery corner.

Shadows and light (December to February)

The shadows and light week uses the short days: shadows outside and with a flashlight, and the light we see by.

• Question: "Where does your shadow go when the sun goes in?"
• Letter: L is for light.
• Craft: shadow puppets. Dark card animal shapes on craft sticks, and a grown-up holds the flashlight.
• Song: "Hey Diddle Diddle."
• Snack: Frozen Banana Pops.
• Outside: shadow tag on a sunny day.
• Books: I See a Boy (level 3), Where Is the Cat? (level 3), and two read-alouds, The Little Lantern and The Sun Is a Star.

Night and day (December, January)

The night and day week is the sun and the moon, who is awake at night, and bedtime.

• Question: "Which animals are awake at night?"
• Letter: N is for night.
• Craft: a day and night plate: one half yellow with a sun, the other dark with a moon and star stickers.

- Song: "Brahms' Lullaby," from the lullabies list.
- Snack: Owl Toast.
- Outside: call "Day!" and everyone runs and plays; call "Night!" and everyone lies still, eyes closed.
- Books: Not Yet, Ted (level 3), Sit, Tap, Nap (level 0), Dad Naps (level 0), and The Moon Follows Me, a read-aloud.

Trains (December, January)

The trains week is engines and cars, tracks and tunnels.

- Question: "Where would you go on a train?"
- Letter: T is for train.
- Craft: a box train: wheels glued on small boxes or paper rectangles, joined in a line with yarn.
- Song: "Simple Simon."
- Snack: Banana Sushi.
- Outside: the whole room is a train, hands on shoulders. Chug slow, chug fast, through the tunnel under a blanket.
- Books: The Red Bus (level 1), Dex on the Bus (level 3), The Big Truck (level 2), and Go, Go, Go, a read-aloud.

Trains is a good week for days too cold to stay out long: the outside game works in a hallway.

Any-time themes that fit January and February

Six winter weeks won't fill three months, and you won't want them to. The month pages for January and February also list themes that fit any time of year: colors, shapes, dinosaurs, space, fairy tales, feelings, counting, nursery rhymes, pets, and friends and kindness, among others. The December page lists the winter weeks, and the December themes post goes into that month.

Try this week

Plan a winter week around the weather you actually have.

1. Check the window. Snow on the ground? Run winter and snow. Bright and cold? Shadows and light. Gray and dark by pickup? Night and day.
2. Open the planner, pick next Monday and the theme, and pick your room's ages.
3. Add a day note for an indoor plan in case it's too cold to go out.
4. Print the wall sheet and the family note. The family note has the song's words, so families can sing it at home.
5. Put the theme's books on a tablet from Peabody's free stories before Monday.

Three things providers ask

Are there winter themes without holidays?

All six winter themes are about what children see and do in winter. None is built on a holiday or a character.

What if we have no snow?

Run shadows and light, night and day, or trains. The winter and snow week's melt race needs only two ice cubes, so it works in any climate.

Which winter theme suits the youngest?

Bears and hibernation, or night and day. Both have level 0 books with a pattern twos can say, and quiet songs for little ones.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/winter-themes-preschool